IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

NATASHA KHODAK

1416 Nancy Drive

Southampton, PA 18966

CIVIL ACTION

Plaintiff,

No.:

v.

JURY TRIAL DEMAND

KVK OPCO, INC. d/b/a KVK TECH, INC. 110 Terry Drive, Suite 200 Newtown, PA 18940 and KVK TECH, INC. 110 Terry Drive, Suite 200 Newtown, PA 18940

Defendants.

CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Natasha Khodak (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff"), by and through her undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

I. Introduction

1. Plaintiff has initiated this action to redress violations by Defendants, KVK OPCO, Inc. d/b/a KVK Tech, Inc. and KVK Tech, Inc., of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA" - 29 U.S.C. §§ 621 et. seq.), violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII" - 42 USC §§2000e et. seq.) and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act ("PHRA" - 43 P.S. Section 951, et. seq). Plaintiff was discriminated against, subjected to a hostile work

¹ Plaintiff will move to amend the instant Complaint to include violations of the PHRA after full administrative exhaustion before the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. Such claims will identically mirror Plaintiff's federal claims asserted herein under the ADEA and Title VII.

environment and was unlawfully terminated by Defendants because of her advanced age and/or her gender, causing her to suffer extensive harm.

II. Jurisdiction and Venue

- 2. This Court may properly maintain jurisdiction over Defendants because Defendants' contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendants to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in *International Shoe Co v. State of Washington*, 326 U.S. 310 (1945) and its progeny.
- 3. This action is initiated pursuant to a federal law. The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has original subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because the claims arise under the laws of the United States. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's state law claims because they arise out of the same circumstances and are based upon a common nucleus of operative fact.
- 4. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), venue is properly laid in this District because Defendants resides in and/or conducts business in this judicial district and because a substantial part of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims set forth herein occurred in this judicial district.

III. Parties

- 5. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein their entirety as if set forth in full.
 - 6. Plaintiff is an adult individual who resides at the above-captioned address.
- 7. Defendant KVK OPCO, Inc., is a developer, producer and/or distributor of pharmaceuticals whose headquarters is located at the above-captioned address.

- 8. Defendant KVK Tech, Inc. is a developer, producer and/or distributor of pharmaceuticals whose headquarters is located at the above-captioned address.
- 9. Defendant Entities are both identified as being headquartered at the same address listed in the caption of this Complaint and have the same President, Secretary and Treasurer according to the Secretary of State.
- 10. While Plaintiff's paystubs indicate that KVK OPCO, Inc. was her employer, she received various documents, including but not limited to her application and other various correspondence, which indicated KVK Tech, Inc. was also her employer.
- 11. Based on the foregoing and upon information and belief, because of their interrelation of operations, common ownership or management, centralized control of labor relations, common ownership or financial controls, and other factors, Defendants are sufficiently interrelated and integrated in their activities, labor relations, ownership and management that they may be treated as a single and/or joint employer for purposes of the instant action.²
- 12. At all times relevant herein, Defendants acted through by and through their agents, servants and employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for Defendants.

IV. Factual Background

- 13. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein their entirety as if set forth in full.
 - 14. Plaintiff is a fifty-one (51) year old female.
- 15. Plaintiff worked for Defendants for approximately fifteen (15) months before her involuntary termination on or about November 3, 2015 (discussed *infra*).

² Defendants KVK-Tech, Inc. and KVK OPCO, Inc. d/b/a KVK Tech, Inc., *hereinafter* shall be collectively referred to as "Defendants" unless otherwise indicated.

- 16. On or about August 4, 2014, Plaintiff was hired by Defendant as a sales support manager to provide support to the Director of Sales and Marketing, Lori Pinkleton (*hereinafter* referred to as "Ms. Pinkleton").
- 17. Although Ms. Pinkleton as the Director of Sales and Marketing was operating out of the Michigan location, Plaintiff primarily performed her duties at the Defendants' Newtown, PA headquarters (the Defendants' above captioned address) under the indirect supervision of Murty Vepuri (Consultant), and the direct supervision of Joseph Lefebvre (Vice President of Business Development, Marketing & API Sourcing).
- 18. Throughout her fifteen (15) month employment with Defendants, Plaintiff was a dedicated and hard-working employee who did not exhibit any significant disciplinary concerns. In fact, in or about December of 2014, Plaintiff received a positive review on her last performance evaluation.
- 19. In or about June of 2015 (approximately five (5) months before her termination), Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, hired an individual by the name of Conrad (last name unknown), a male in his thirties (30s), as an employee in the Plaintiff's department.
- 20. Within a few days after Conrad was hired, Mr. Vepuri requested that Plaintiff train him to perform some of her job duties, including but not limited to generating reports, sending reports to Ms. Pinkleton, maintaining files for Ms. Pinkleton, and other essential duties of Plaintiff's position.
- 21. When Plaintiff questioned Mr. Vepuri about training Conrad, a younger male employee, to perform her essential work duties (discussed *supra*), Mr. Vepuri told Plaintiff that

the company was expanding and that just in case something were to happen to Plaintiff, the newly hired employee(s) could "fill-in" for her.

- 22. Plaintiff complied with Defendants' management's aforementioned request to train Conrad with her essential duties based on the fear that if she refused, she would be terminated.
- 23. Approximately one (1) month before Plaintiff's termination (in or about October 2015), Michael (last known unknown), another male in his thirties (30s), was hired by Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, to work in Plaintiff's department.
- 24. Again, Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, requested Plaintiff to train Michael, the aforementioned newly-hired younger, male employee, to perform Plaintiff's essential duties, including but limited to, generating reports, sending reports to Ms. Pinkleton, maintaining files for Ms. Pinkleton, and other tasks that directly assisted Ms. Pinkleton.
- 25. Once Plaintiff began training the two aforementioned younger, male employees, Conrad and Michael (discussed *supra*), Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, began assigning Plaintiff's job duties to these newly-hired younger, male employees, despite the fact that Plaintiff had significantly more experience.
- 26. In addition, Plaintiff also witnessed during her employment that Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, openly treated employees who were more advanced in age (including herself) in a derogatory, demeaning and condescending manner, including but not limited to, scrutinizing their work performance more closely than their younger counterparts and reallocating duties from older employees to younger employees.

- 27. In addition to Defendants' discriminatory actions towards Plaintiff and other similarly situated employees due to their advanced ages (discussed *supra*), Plaintiff was also subjected to discriminatory actions based on her gender.
- 28. Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, openly treated female employees (including Plaintiff) in a discriminatory and disparate manner (as compared to their male counterparts), including but not limited to, taking away assignments and job duties from female employees and giving them to male employees who were similarly-situated and/or less experienced, hiring male applicants over female applicants who were equally-qualified and/or more qualified, and other preferential treatment towards male employees within the workplace.
- 29. On or about November 3, 2015, without any prior warning, Plaintiff was notified by Defendant's management and/or HR Department that she was being terminated because her position was being eliminated. Later that same day, Ms. Pinkleton contacted and expressed to Plaintiff that she had advised Defendants' management that she did not agree with their decision to terminate her [Plaintiff's] employment.
- 30. Furthermore, when Plaintiff was terminated from her position, both aforementioned younger, male co-workers, Conrad and Michael remained employed, despite the fact that Plaintiff was more senior and more qualified.
- 31. Therefore, Plaintiff believes and avers that Defendants' management, including but limited to Mr. Vepuri, discriminated against her and terminated her because of her advance age based on *inter alia* (1) the reallocation of her essential job duties to younger, less experienced employees; (2) the proximity of when her essential duties were reallocated to younger employees in relation to her termination (i.e. less than one (1) month); and (3) to the fact

that younger, less experienced employees, remained employed performing Plaintiff's job duties after her position was allegedly eliminated.

32. Further, Plaintiff avers that Defendants' management, including but limited to Mr. Vepuri, discriminated against her and ultimately terminated her because of her gender based on *inter alia* (1) the reallocation of her essential duties to less experienced male employees; (2) the proximity of when her essential duties were reallocated to male employees in relation to her termination (i.e. less than one (1) month); and (3) the fact that less experienced male employees remained employed performing Plaintiff's job duties after her position was allegedly eliminated.

Count I

Violations of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA") (Age Discrimination: Wrongful Termination and Hostile Work Environment) -Against Both Defendants-

- 33. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 34. While employed by Defendants, Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, subjected Plaintiff to a hostile work environment because of her advanced age, through demeaning, disparate, and discriminatory treatment.
- 35. The aforementioned treatment that Plaintiff was subjected to by Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, was consistent and pervasive during the months leading to her involuntary termination, to the point that it was affecting Plaintiff's ability to do her job (as her tasks were being taken away and assigned to younger, less experienced employees).
- 36. Despite Plaintiff being a dedicated and loyal employee that performed her job well, Defendants assigned Plaintiff's essential duties to younger co-workers whom were less senior and had significantly less experience.

- 37. Plaintiff was ultimately terminated and told that it was due to her job being eliminated; however, younger and less experienced employees were retained and remained employed by Defendants.
- 38. Therefore, Plaintiff believes and avers that her age was a determinative factor in the decision to strip her of her job duties and ultimately terminate her.
 - 39. These actions as aforesaid constitute unlawful retaliation under the ADEA.

COUNT II

Violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act ("Title VII") (Gender Discrimination: Wrongful Termination & Hostile Work Environment) -Against Both Defendants-

- 40. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 41. While employment with Defendants, Plaintiff was subjected to hostility and animosity because of her gender by Defendants' management, including but not limited to, having her job duties taken away and assigned to less experienced male co-workers, being treated in a rude and condescending manner (as compared to her male co-workers) and ultimately being terminated for an alleged job elimination while her male co-workers (who were less experienced) remained employed performing her job duties.
- 42. The aforementioned treatment that Plaintiff was subjected to by Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Vepuri, was consistent and pervasive during the months leading to her involuntary termination, to the point that it was affecting Plaintiff's ability to do her job (as her tasks were being taken away and assigned to less experienced, male employees).
- 43. Plaintiff believes and avers that she was subjected to a hostile work environment, stripped of her essential job duties, and ultimately terminated because of her gender.

- 44. These actions as aforesaid constitute unlawful discrimination under Title VII.

 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:
- A. Defendants are to be prohibited from continuing to maintain its illegal policy, practice or custom of discriminating/retaliating against employees and are to be ordered to promulgate an effective policy against such unlawful acts and to adhere thereto;
- B. Defendants are to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendants' illegal actions, including but not limited to past lost earnings, future lost earnings, salary, pay increases, bonuses, medical and other benefits, training, promotions, pension, and seniority. Plaintiff should be accorded those benefits illegally withheld from the date she first suffered retaliation/interference at the hands of Defendants until the date of verdict;
- C. Plaintiff is to be awarded liquidated, as permitted by applicable law, in an amount determined by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendants for its willful, deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendants or other employers from engaging in such misconduct in the future;
- D. Plaintiff is to be accorded any and all other equitable and legal relief as the Court deems just, proper and appropriate;
- E. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable legal fees as provided by applicable federal and state law;
- F. Any verdict in favor of Plaintiff is to be molded by the Court to maximize the financial recovery available to the Plaintiff in light of the caps on certain damages set forth in applicable federal law; and

G. Plaintiff's claims are to receive trial by jury to the extent allowed by applicable law. Plaintiff has also endorsed this demand on the caption of this Complaint in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:

Ari R. Karpf, Esquire 3331 Street Road Two Greenwood Square, Suite 128 Bensalem, PA 19020 (215) 639-0801

Dated: August 31, 2016

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

Natasha Khodak

CIVIL ACTION

<u>Felephone</u>	FAX Number	er E-Mail Address	E-Mail Address			
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639-4970	0 akarpf@karpf-law.com				
Date	Attorney-at-					
		Plaintiff	•			
3		•	417			
(f) Standard Manageme	nt - Cases that do not:	fall into any one of the other tracks.	(x)			
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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

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FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA — DESIGNATION FORM to be assignment to appropriate calendar.	ne used by counsel to indicate the category of the Case for the purpose of			
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Address of Defendant: 110 Terry Drive, Suite 200, Newtown, PA 1894	40			
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Does this civil action involve a nongovernmental corporate party with any parent corporation a (Attach two copies of the Disclosure Statement Form in accordance with Fed.R.Civ.P. 7.1(a)	and any publicly held corporation owning 10% or more of its stock? Yes \(\text{No} \)			
Does this case involve multidistrict litigation possibilities?	Yes No 🗓			
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 Does this case involve the validity or intringement of a patent andady in any outside terminated action in this court? 	Yes□ No□			
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2. D FELA	2. D Airplane Personal Injury			
3. D Jones Act-Personal Injury	3. Assault, Defamation			
4. D Antitrust	4. Marine Personal Injury			
5. D Patent	5. D Motor Vehicle Personal Injury			
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11. □ All other Federal Question Cases (Please specify)				
ARBITRATION CERT	Category)			
1, Ari R. Karpf counsel of record do hereby cert A Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, Section 3(c)(2), that to the best of my knowledge and	ory: d belief, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of			
\$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs; Relief other than monetary damages is sought.	The same of			
	ARK2484			
DATE:Attomoy-at-Law	Attorney I.D.# 91538			
NOTE: A trial do novo will be a trial by jury only if the	nere has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.			
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not retired to any case now pending o	r within one year previously terminated action in this court			
except as noted above.				
DATE:	ARK2484			
Attorney-at-Law	Attorney 1.D.# 91538			
CIV, 609 (5/2012)	7,1000			

JS 44 (Rev. 12/12)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

purpose of initiating the civil do	cket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCT	TONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO	DRM.)			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS			
KHODAK, NATASHA				KVK OPCO, INC. D/B/A KVK TECH, INC,			
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Bucks (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.			
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A Karpf, Karpf & Cerutti, P. Suite 128, Bensalem, PA	.C., 3331 Street Road,	Two Greenwood	Square, aw.com	Attorneys (If Known)			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)	III. CI	ITIZENSHIP OF P (For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)	
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Brief description of c Violations of the	ause: : ADEA, Title VI	I and th	(Do not cite jurisdictional st 29USC621), Title VII o e PHRA.	atutes unless diversity): f the Civil Rights Act of 196	54 "Title VII" (42USC2000) ly if demanded in complaint:	
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2	S IS A CLASS ACTIO 23, F.R.Cv.P.	ON I	DEMAND \$	JURY DEMAN		
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE ·	<u> </u>		DOCKET NUMBER		
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